

UNIT PLAN BRAINSTORM



Colonialism in India (History, Social Studies, English Language Arts)

Begin by defining colonialism. Then, discuss its impact on cultures and societies, and highlight India as a focus. Work with your students to investigate primary and secondary sources to understand the motivations, effects and resistance against colonial rule in India. Simultaneously, explore the emergence of circus as a form of entertainment, considering its complicated roots in various cultures and its evolution over time. After you've introduced these two main ideas, have students research how circus traditions from different parts of the world were influenced by colonial interactions, trade and migration. To culminate, ask students to share their findings through an artistic form. They could create a short film, draw an image or diagram, or stage a play or poetry reading.

To support this unit, use the Context to Consider portion of the Learn and Engage section.

Animal Exhibits (History, Social Studies, English Language Arts, Visual Art)

Zoos reflect the ever-evolving attitudes and beliefs of societies towards animals. Discuss with your students the concept of zoos as windows into the nuanced human relationship with nature. Prompts you might use to get them started are: *What is the purpose of a zoo?* and *How have these purposes changed over time?* As a class or in small groups, research the origin and evolution of zoos, from ancient civilizations showcasing alluring creatures to modern conservation efforts. Explore questions like: *Who was responsible for the establishment of early zoos?* *What societal values influenced the evolution of zoos?* and *How did Victorian menageries differ from the zoos of today?* Continue by exploring the ethical considerations of animal captivity and display, including the perspectives of zoo creators and curators, as well as the public, by asking questions like: *How might these perspectives shape the way animals are exhibited?* *What emotions and thoughts do you think visitors experience when viewing zoo animals?* Invite students to create visual representations, such as drawings, collages or dioramas, depicting various historical zoo settings, highlighting their distinct characteristics. Ask volunteers to show-and-tell their artistic creations while sharing verbally what they learned during their research.

To support this unit, use the An Animal Tale Creativity Page in the Discover and Create section.

Harry who? Harry Houdini! (History, English Language Arts, Theater)

Step into a world of illusion and uncover the artistry behind Harry Houdini's mystifying feat: making an elephant disappear! Spark curiosity through a class discussion about illusions and their impact on human perception by asking one simple question: *What is an illusion?* Divide students into groups and ask each group to research one of the following four ideas: Harry Houdini's life and background; the rise and fall of the Hippodrome Theatre; how Houdini made an elephant vanish; how the public reacted to this vanishing act. Encourage students to use a range of sources, such as newspaper articles, photographs and historical texts. Have each group share their findings with the class. Conclude the unit with a debate by asking: *Was Houdini's vanishing elephant act a form of art?* *How did his illusions challenge reality?* Invite students to voice their perspectives, supported by evidence from their research. As a culminating event, have students design their own illusions or artistic interpretations inspired by Houdini's magic, showcasing their grasp of perspective, creativity and the boundary between reality and imagination.

To support this unit, use the Well, THAT'S Debatable... Activity in the Respond and Connect section.